

REMARKS

Claims 32-33 were rejected. Claim 33 is amended. Claims 32-33 are now pending. The above amendments and the following remarks are considered by Applicants to overcome each rejection raised by the Examiner and to place the application in condition for allowance.

The Examiner rejected claims 32-33 pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith, et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,632,061) ("Smith") in view of Adams, et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,991,976) ("Adams").

Smith discloses an assist strap that includes an elongated handle-shaped body having opposite ends with inwardly projecting locking flanges formed on a tapered locking member. Adams discloses a backing member that includes a locking structure for locking a Z-axis clip in alignment with the aperture of the clip aligned with the aperture in the backing member.

These cited references, however, do not disclose "a holding part ... separate from the body part," as required by independent claim 32. The Examiner contends that Smith discloses this limitation. Smith's "holding part" (locking part 32) includes a tapered lead-in surface 31 terminating in a locking flange 33 spaced a distance from support surface 19. Smith's holding part is carried by Smith's "body part" (contacting surface 39), and is supported on the other side 25 of the thin wall 14. Smith's holding part 32, however, is not separate from its body part 39. Smith's body part 39 proceeds from the head part, such as handle 10, and can be pushed through the opening in the thin wall. Rather than being separate from body part 39, Smith's holding part and body part are formed as one piece of material, such as plastic. (See Smith, column 2:38-42, 2:53-65; and 3:11-17.) Further, Adams does not disclose this limitation.

Further, the cited references do not disclose a holding part "whose free end has an inclined surface for supporting the body part on the rim or edge of the opening without play," as also required by independent claim 32. The Examiner contends that Smith's surface 33 is such an inclined surface. But locking flange 33 is clearly parallel to the surface of the thin wall 25 and rectangular to base 39, as stated in column 3:26. Smith's "holding part" (locking part 32), on the other hand, does have an inclined surface in tapered lead-in surface 31. (See Smith, column 2:53-56). But this tapered surface 31 is not provided and not usable for supporting the body part on the rim or edge of the opening without play.

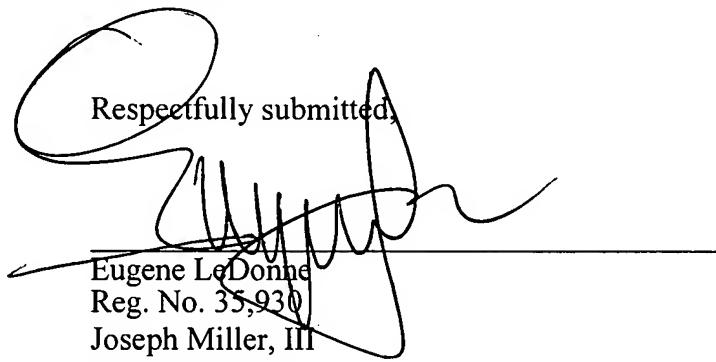
By the claimed tapering, the invention can remove any play between the inclined surface

and the rim or edge of the opening of the thin wall by lateral movement of the inclined surface with respect to the edge or rim. This shifting movement is self-locking in the direction of greater play because of friction between the surfaces shifting to one another. The construction of Smith attempts to remove play by movement of surface 33 perpendicular to surface 33 by bending counterclockwise the part made of bendable plastic carrying the locking flange 33, as seen in Figure 2, under the pressure of spring 40. There is no friction and therefore no self-locking effect, and thus play is not actually removed but occurs again if the force of the spring is overridden.

For these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the invention of claim 32 or dependent claim 33. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

An early action on the merits of these claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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